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MASTER OF MILITARY STUDIES

TITLE

LAR: More Than Just a System, It is a Mindset

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OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF
MASTER OF MILITARY STUDIES

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Executive Summary

Title: LAR: More than a system it, it is a mind set

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Thesis: The Light Armored Reconnaissance (LAR) community can set the necessary conditions to posture LAR units to be effective in the future operating environment by developing a vision statement and enhancing current doctrine that defines the role of LAR units across the range of military operations.

Discussion: LAR units have conducted extensive operations across the spectrum of conflict. LAR Battalions' history validates the role of LAR units within the Ground Combat Element (GCE). LAR units have participated in multiple conflicts including Operation DESERT STORM, Operation ENDURING FREEDOM (OEF), Operation IRAQI FREEDOM (OIF), and low intensity conflicts such as operations in Somalia and Kosovo. The problem is that the lessons learned from these operations have not been captured in the current doctrine. The LAR community's lacks the proper vision for the future employment of LAR units. The LAR community must take a holistic approach when defining the concept of employment of LAR units beyond 2025. The focus of the LAR community should not be exclusively on the equipment but also on the future doctrinal employment of LAR units.

Conclusion: In order to posture future LAR units in confronting the challenges of the future battle field significant improvements must be made. The first step is to validate the current the doctrine as outlined in the MCWP 3-14. The U.S. Army has made improvement to its doctrine with regard to its Cavalry units which LAR units follow to a degree. In an era of uncertainty and change, the LAR community should address its doctrine with the same tenacity and vigor that it did at its inception. This approach would yield a single point of reference that addresses the LAR unit from a holistic approach. It is the LAR mindset and not the equipment that make the LAR unit a combat multiplier on the battlefield.

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Preface

I have had the privilege of witnessing firsthand the tremendous capability that Light Armored Reconnaissance (LAR) units provide the Ground Combat Element (GCE). I have also seen how the LAR community struggles in defining the true roll LAR units have across the spectrum of conflict. Simply stated, the LAR community has not developed a vision statement that provides context in how LAR units are to be employed in the future operating environment.

While conducting research for this paper, I have found many professional works that have addressed the training, organization, employment, and equipping of LAR units. The focus of this paper, however, is on the concept of employment of LAR units across the spectrum of conflict, regardless of what of type vehicle platform the LAR community uses or how LAR unit are organized. Without a vision or a future operating concept, the LAR community is at risk of not being able to effectively prepare LAR units for future conflicts in fiscally and resource constrained environment.

I would like to thank Col Alexander USMC for showing me what “right looks like” in the employment of LAR units across the spectrum of conflict and Dr. Paul Gelpi for helping me with this paper. I would also like to recognize the many professionals in the LAR community who I have served with over the years. Finally I would like to thank my wife who will always be the number two man in the stack.

Introduction

The Light Armored Reconnaissance (LAR) community can set the necessary conditions to posture LAR units to be effective in the future operating environment by developing a vision statement and enhancing current doctrine that defines the role of LAR units across the range of military operations. LAR battalions' participation in current and past conflicts has demonstrated that LAR units can provide a tremendous capability to the Ground Combat Element (GCE) across the spectrum of conflict. Doctrinally preparing capable LAR units to be effective in the future operating environment is a challenge for the LAR community. The 34th Commandant of the Marine Corps, General James T. Conway, mandated that the Marine Corps "establish a foundation for our operational concepts and identify critical steps needed to shape our Corps for the increasingly volatile and uncertain future."¹ Future operations will require LAR units to operate in environments characterized by traditional and irregular warfare.

The concept of employment of LAR units across the range of military operations has not been codified. LAR commanders must utilize multiple doctrinal references for the training of LAR units. The LAR community has failed to provide LAR commanders one doctrinal reference that defines the roles LAR units have within the GCE across the spectrum of conflict. Currently the LAR community has stipulated that LAR units should assume more of a cavalry role² within the GCE. Past and contemporary operations have required LAR units to function in more of a Light Armored Infantry (LAI) capacity, specifically when conducting operations in urbanized terrain. The future operating environment will require LAR units to conduct IW operations in both an urban and rural setting. There is not a mechanism within the LAR community that adequately captures the myriad of lessons learned from LAR units' participation in operations that have spanned for more than 27 years.

Because of underdeveloped LAR doctrine, the role of the scout has not been adequately defined. Regardless of what type of operation the LAR unit is conducting, the 0311 (Infantry Rifleman) scout is a critical component. LAR units must utilize the Infantry Training and Readiness (T&R) manual to train LAR scouts. It is not sufficient for LAR unit leaders to rely exclusively on the infantry T&R when training 0311s to be effective LAR scouts.

The hard fought lessons learned from LAR units' past experiences are not amply reflected in the LAR battalion's Mission Essential Task List (METL).³ The LAR community lacks the proper vision for future employment within the GCE. The LAR community in essence must sell itself to the GCE by advertising the capabilities and highlight the limitations of LAR units. This is not unlike a LAR platoon commander, who is attached to a Battalion Landing Team (BLT) assigned to a Marine Expeditionary Unit (MEU), articulating the best way the LAR platoon can be employed.

The LAR community's primary focus has been upgrading the existing Family of Light Armored Vehicles (FoLAVs). Arguably upgrading the FoLAVs is critical to the LAR battalions' effectiveness but there has not been equity in the LAR community's efforts in upgrading doctrine.⁴ Therefore the LAR community must foster a mindset that is dedicated to enhancing LAR units' effectiveness across the spectrum of conflict beyond just focusing on equipment sets. The LAR community must understand the future operating environment and develop doctrine that best serves the needs of the GCE. Therefore it is essential that the LAR community defines the role of LAR units beyond current operations. If the LAR community fails in this endeavor then LAR units may be at risk of being under-utilized or not properly leveraged by the GCE. This is especially true in a fiscally and resourced constrained environment where LAR units will more than likely not have an increase in structure and upgrades to the FoLAVs will be delayed.

The Future Operating Environment

Before LAR battalions can doctrinally prepare to face complexities and challenges of the future operating environment, the LAR community must first understand the future challenges. The 2010 *National Security Strategy* (NSS) outlines the strategic environment for the beginning of the Twenty First century.⁵ The NSS describes the strategic environment as one of “violent extremism, threats of weapons of mass destruction...and failing states that breed conflict and endanger regional and global security.”⁶ The 2011 *National Military Strategy* (NMS) defines the role of the Department of Defense (DOD) in addressing future challenges. The NMS identifies four objectives, which were derived from the NSS and 2010 *Quadrennial Defense Review*, which are “to counter violent extremism, deter and defeat aggression, strengthen international and regional security, and shape the future force.”⁷ The NMS goes further in stating that the DOD will have the capability of “fielding a modular, adaptive, general purpose forces that can be employed in the full range of military operations.”⁸

Both the NSS and NMS stipulate that the strategic environment will necessitate the need for DOD to be capable of conducting operations across the spectrum of conflict to face future challenges to national security. Many of these types of operations fall within the realm of IW. In December 2008, DOD published Directive 3000.07 that stipulated that “IW is as strategically important as traditional warfare.”⁹ The directive established a policy that assigned “responsibilities of the DoD to conduct IW and develop capabilities to address irregular challenges to national security....”¹⁰ The emphasis on DOD’s ability to conduct joint operations in the realm of IW is outlined in the *Irregular Warfare: Countering Irregular Threats, Joint Operating Concept* (IW JOC) version 2.0. The IW JOC describes “how the joint force is expected to conduct joint operations within a military campaign of the future.”¹¹

The Marine Corps has been proactive in developing future operating concepts that define the role of the Marine Corps through the Twenty First century. In 2010, the Marine Corps published the *USMC Vision and Strategy for 2025*. This document outlined the six fundamental core competencies of the Marine Corps which are:

1. The conduct of persistent forward naval engagement that is prepared to respond as the Nation's force in readiness, 2. The employment of integrated combined arms across the range of military operations, and can operate as part of a joint or multinational force, 3. Providing forces and specialized detachments for service aboard naval ships, on stations, and for operations ashore, 4. The conduct of joint forcible entry from the sea and develops amphibious landing force capabilities and doctrine, 5. The conduct of complex expeditionary operations in the urban littorals and other challenging environments, and 6. Leading joint and multinational operations and enables interagency activities.¹²

The 35th Commandant of the Marine Corps General James F. Amos's planning guidance published in 2010, continued to advance these core competencies and defines how they will be applied to the future operating environment. General Amos suggests that "the future will not be like today...a world of increasing instability, and conflict, characterized by poverty, competition for resources, urbanization, over population, and extremism... fosters safe havens for terrorist, insurgent and criminal groups that threaten the U.S."¹³ The Marine Corps senior leadership has provided the necessary context in shaping the future of the Marine Corps and the future employment of the Marine Air Ground Task Force (MAGTF).

Both Commandants have succinctly outlined the future threats and the operational environment that faces the Marine Corps. Many of the new initiatives, doctrine, and training have been derived from the lessons learned in OEF and Operation IRAQI FREEDOM (OIF). In June 2010 the Marine Corps published the third edition of the *Marine Corps Operating Concepts* (MOC) which encapsulates the relevance of lessons derived from contemporary battlefields as they relate to the future operating environment.

The purpose of the MOC is to “provide a conceptual guide for current and future force development and experimentation.”¹⁴ The MOC defines the characteristics of the Twenty First Century Marine Corps that makes the “Marine Corps especially relevant in the current and future security era.”¹⁵ The emphasis of the MOC is on the Marine Corps ability to be “responsive across the range of military operations.”¹⁶ General Tony Zinni USMC (Ret) in his book, *The Battle for Peace*, succinctly describe the future operating environment; “the battlefield is different, the front lines are different; the foxhole is different.”¹⁷ The LAR community must understand the complexities and challenges that face future LAR units.

The LAR community must define the role of LAR units within the context of the future operating environment. The NSS, NMS, DOD directives, and Marine Corps future operating concepts reside predominantly at the strategic level but all have significant impacts at the tactical level. The LAR community cannot properly organize, train, or equip future LAR units, if the LAR community does not fully understand how the Marine Corps is prepared to face the complexities and challenges of the future.

Concept of Employment in Traditional Warfare

The concept of employment of LAR units within the spectrum of traditional warfare has not been codified as outlined within the MCWP 3-14, *Employment of the Light Armored Reconnaissance Battalion*. Traditional warfare is defined as a form of warfare between the regulated militaries of states, or alliances of states, in which the objective is to defeat an adversary’s armed forces, destroy an adversary’s war-making capability, or seize or retain territory in order to force a change in adversary’s government or policies.¹⁸ The concept of employment of LAR units with regard to traditional warfare is continuing to evolve.

Transitioning from a Light Armored Infantry Battalion (LAI) to a LAR battalion is an example

of how the LAR community matured to meet the needs of the GCE within the realm of traditional warfare. The role the LAR unit within the GCE today has changed significantly since its inception. The current MCWP 3-14 stipulates that the Light Armored Vehicle (LAV) platform should not be viewed as an armor personnel carrier or as an infantry fighting vehicle.¹⁹ Thus the current doctrine is divergent from how the LAV was employed within the LAI battalion to how the LAV is employed in a LAR battalion. LAR doctrine has transcended from an operational concept, to mirroring U.S. Army cavalry doctrine, to its present form found within the MCWP 3-14. In addition to the MCWP 3-14 the LAR community also relies on the U.S. Army Field Manuals (FMs) such as FM 3-20, *Reconnaissance Troop*, FM 17-98-1, *Scout Leader's Handbook*, and FM 3-21, *Reconnaissance Battalion*. The U.S. Army Field Manual (FM) 17-95 *Cavalry Operations*, defines the purpose of cavalry is to perform reconnaissance and provide security in close operations.²⁰ The same verbiage is found in the LAR battalions' mission statement to also include the concept of LAR units' employment in limited offensive and defensive operations.

The mission statement for the LAR battalion, as outlined in MCWP 3-14 is, "*To conduct reconnaissance, security, and economy of force operations and within its capabilities, limited offensive or defense operations that exploits the unit's mobility and firepower.*"²¹ The MCWP 3-14 goes further to state that the LAR battalion may function as an independent maneuver element or its subordinate companies may support other tactical units within the GCE.²² Operation DESERT STORM and initial combat operations in support of OIF have validated the concept of employment of LAR units in the execution of traditional tasks such as reconnaissance, security operations, and limited offensive and defensive operations. In the context of traditional warfare LAR units have taken on more of a cavalry role.

There has been debate within the LAR community as to whether or not LAR units should just be designated as Marine Corps cavalry.²³ Though this is not widely embraced there is merit to the argument. The LAR community is relying on both Marine Corps and U.S. Army doctrine to train LAR units. The U.S. Army is also struggling in defining what the right organization and equipment type is necessary to conduct cavalry operations. If the “cavalry unit has significant combat power then the supported unit will more than likely be employed as a maneuver element while tasking another unit to conduct reconnaissance, if it does not have significant combat power and is too light then the supported unit normally does not consider it to be survivable enough on the battlefield.”²⁴ The solution is for the LAR community to enhance the MCWP 3-14 with relevant U.S. Army cavalry doctrine. This would provide LAR unit leaders with one doctrinal reference instead of multiple sources. An example of this would be merging applicable portions of FM 3-20.98, *Reconnaissance Platoon*, with regard urban operations thereby enhancing MCWP 3-14 in the employment of LAR units in urbanized terrain.

LAR Unit Employment in the Urban Environment

The LAR community must embrace the fact that the future operating environment will required LAR units to be employed in the urban environment. The concept of LAR units’ employment in the urban environment needs to be developed. The MCWP 3-14 does address Military Operations in Urban Terrain (MOUT) and what should be considered in the employment of LAR units.²⁵ The MCWP 3-14 is woefully inadequate in defining the employment of LAR units in MOUT. FM 3-20.98 provides more detail to the concept of employment of mechanized reconnaissance assets within MOUT by stating, “Because of the increased likelihood of urban operations all reconnaissance platoons must understand how to

operate in this environment with varying threat levels.”²⁶ Future operations will require LAR units to function within the urban landscape.

The biggest limitation to the LAR unit in the urban environment is the lack of dismounted capability that is organic to the LAR battalion.²⁷ Other restrictions include the lack of the LAV’s mobility in built up areas, extensive dead space around the vehicle, and vulnerability to threat anti-armor weapons.²⁸ Concepts need to be developed that address proper task organization that would consist of dismounted infantry units and LAR units. This is not unlike the Team Tank or Team Mech concept where the GCE cross attaches elements from an Armored Amphibian Vehicle (AAV) unit with infantry units and tank units. The LAR community needs look at developing tactics, techniques, and procedures that integrate other tactical infantry units.

The Marine Corps employs a myriad of mechanized and/or motorized assets when conducting operations in an urban setting. On one end of the spectrum of armored assets employment in MOUT, is the M1A1 Abrams Tank and on the other end of the spectrum is the Mine Resistant Ambush Protected (MRAP) or the High Mobility Multipurpose Wheeled Vehicle (HMMWV). The AAV fits within the spectrum below the M1A1 and above the HMMWV or MRAP. The LAV platform fits nicely in the middle, more maneuverable than a M1A1 with less fire power and protection but less maneuverable and more fire power than a HMMWV or MRAP. The other advantage is that the LAR unit does have organic scouts that can be employed for protection of the vehicle. Historically LAR units have been employed extensively in urban areas such as Operation JUST CAUSE in Panama²⁹, Operation RESTORE HOPE in Somalia,³⁰ and OIF³¹.

LAR units have had to develop ad hoc tactics, techniques, and procedures when being employed in an urban environment. The MCWP 3-35, *Military Operations on Urbanized Terrain*, stipulates that, “The commander plans to employ armored vehicles to take advantage of their long-range fires, heavy machine gun fires, self-generating smoke, and mobility.”³² This is another example of where LAR unit leaders must rely on other doctrinal references when training LAR units to operate in an urban environment. The solution is to validate techniques previous LAR units have employed in past operations and merge relevant doctrine from other MCWPs into the MCWP 3-14.

Future Operating Concepts

The role of LAR units within the Marine Corps future operating concept of Enhanced Marine Air Ground Task Force (MAGTF) Operations (EMO) needs to be developed. EMO “embraces maneuver warfare doctrine”³³ and “recognizes the need for decentralized action to solve complex problems, and adapt to ambiguous situations at a tempo that outpaces our adversaries.”³⁴ The MOC stipulates that within the context of EMO, the MAGTF must have the ability to “employ, support, and sustain subordinate maneuver elements, at extended distances, or in compartmentalized terrain which creates physical separation from higher or adjacent units... employ decentralized operations to assure access through multiple entry points.”³⁵ The LAR community is in the best position to develop the concept of employment of LAR units within the EMO construct.

The characteristics of EMO are not foreign to LAR leaders. The LAR unit’s ability to operate over extended distances that is not mutually supported by adjacent units is common place. As the Marine Corps continues to develop the concept of EMO the LAR community needs

to maintain the mindset that LAR units are highly effective when operating on a nonlinear battlefield and LAR leaders are comfortable within a decentralized command construct.

The concept for command and control in the realm of traditional warfare for LAR units has always been dynamic. This is attributed to the very nature of mounted operations where LAR units have extensive operational reach, tempo, and speed. The ability for leaders at all levels within the LAR Battalion to provide effective command and control also relies on an extensive C4I (Command, Control, Communications, Computers, and Intelligence) architecture. Beyond the systems, the LAR leader must be able to think faster, must be flexible, use brevity, and be decisive, or it becomes the human element as the limiting factor to the unit and not the systems. It is the combination of C4I systems and the mind set of LAR leadership that enables the unit to be successful in the environment that favors EMO.

LAR unit employment in Irregular Warfare

The doctrinal concept of employment of LAR units within the realm of Irregular Warfare (IW) has not been developed. Irregular Warfare (IW) is defined as a violent struggle among state and non-state actors for legitimacy and influence over the relevant population(s).³⁶ Irregular warfare favors indirect and asymmetric approaches, though it may employ the full range of range of military and other capacities, in order to erode the adversary's power, influence, and will.³⁷ IW operations include; counter terrorism, unconventional warfare, foreign internal defense, counterinsurgency (COIN), and stability operations.³⁸ LAR units have been involved with IW activity and operations well before the Global War on Terror (GWOT). LAR units participated in Operation JUST CAUSE in Panama in 1990, Operation RESTORE HOPE in Somalia in 1992, and Operation JOINT GUARDIAN in Kosovo in 1999, all of which fall within the spectrum of IW. LAR units' role in current and past conflicts has demonstrated that LAR units can provide a

tremendous capability when conducting IW specifically in the realm of counterinsurgent operations (COIN) and Stability Operations.

LAR battalions' effectiveness while in support of OIF and OEF has received accolades from the highest levels of U.S. military leadership. In March 2009, the Commander for U.S. Central Command, General David H. Petraeus, submitted an action memo to the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff and Secretary of Defense, praising the Marine Corps LAR units' capability. The memo highlighted LAR units effectiveness with regard to operations conducted in Iraq and Afghanistan by providing commanders a "flexible force, with exceptional mobility, flexible C2, precise and discriminating firepower, and adequate protection for employment in a wide range of mission profiles."³⁹ General Petraeus's action memo validates the fact that LAR units can provide a tremendous capability to the GCE within the realm of IW.

The methods in how LAR battalions were utilized while in support of OIF yields some specific trends that can serve as a foundation for the development of doctrine in the employment of LAR units with COIN. The first trend from OIF is that LAR units were mainly employed by the GCE as an economy of force. This trend continues with LAR battalions' current employment in support of OEF. Though the battle space in Iraq was nonlinear there were still multiple security areas that could not be effectively influenced for extended periods of times. Ultimately what occurs is that the Regimental Combat Teams are assigned extensive Areas of Operation (AOAs) which the GCE cannot possibly influence with organic combat power. 1st LAR Battalion's battle space in Iraq 2004 exceeded over 10,000 square miles. The second trend is that the LAR battalions become battle space owners. There has been debate within the LAR community with regard to battle space ownership.⁴⁰ The LAR community considers that assigning LAR units battle space does not capitalize on LAR units' strength or capabilities.

There are merits to the argument but in the context of COIN the GCE does in fact increase its area of influence by assigning LAR units battle space. This is defined by leveraging the LAR units' ability to conduct operations in areas that cannot be adequately addressed by infantry units whose operational reach is limited.

On the surface there is a dichotomy with regard to having light armored assets conducting COIN. The LAV is designed for high intensity combat and cannot assimilate well in a COIN environment. The tenant that unit must "live amongst the people" and "avoid driving to work" is at odds with LAR units that traverse the battle space in a LAV 25. When LAR units are assigned battle space that consists of populated centers, the unit is limited in how it can employ the LAV coupled with a limited dismounted capability.

Regardless of the apparent limitations, LAR units have been very effective in populated areas. LAR companies have been employed in cities that consisted of population density of over 30,000 people.⁴¹ In order to be effective in this environment, LAR Company Commanders have been creative in the manner in which they task organized their companies and developed tactics, techniques, and procedures that maximized the capability of the vehicle while overcoming the LAV's limitations. The method of LAV and scout integration has been redefined in this type of environment.

LAR units' mobility and operational reach provides the GCE a valuable capability when conducting COIN. LAR units can influence rural areas over extended distances. The methods of reconnaissance operations remain intact regardless if a LAR unit is participating in traditional warfare or if it is countering irregular threats. Security operations such as screening can be conducted in a COIN environment but are limited when defined in the traditional sense. Tactical tasks such as interdiction and disruption are more common place in COIN. LAR units have the

ability to neutralize insurgent lines of communication or deny freedom of movement through disruption and interdiction. As the GCE expands security zones, insurgents often displace into areas that are outside the GCE's area of influence. It is in these types of areas where LAR units are most effective. Routinely LAR units have operated in areas where the GCE presence has been nonexistent by influencing rural areas.

LAR units have also been utilized to protect key lines of communication that can be easily disrupted by insurgent activity. This is not restricted to convoy security but mainly focused on the disrupting insurgent Improvised Explosive Device (IED) cells. LAR units can also be utilized with great effect in conducting targeted raids over extended distances. When the GCE is conducting offensive operations, LAR units have been utilized to weight the GCE's main effort. LAR units have often functioned as a supporting element tasked with isolating objectives, conducting pursuits, movement to contact, or as a quick reaction force.

The LAR units give the GCE great flexibility in the projection of combat power in the COIN environment. Theorists in guerrilla warfare such as Mao Tse-Tung, Truong Chinh, and Al Qaida's doctrine for insurgency have common themes. These are the ideas of striking the opponent where he is weak such as in rear areas, attacking extended lines of communication, or attacks on remote and isolated outposts. These theorists further advocate the need for freedom of movement, safe havens, and means of logistical resupply in areas that the opponent cannot influence. It is exactly in these areas where LAR units are most effective.

LAR units can also play a key role in stability operations specifically in the realm of Security Sector Reform (SSR). Within the context of OIF, LAR units have been partnered with Iraqi Army Battalions, have sourced, trained, and employed provincial security forces, and have supported Iraqi Police.⁴² The LAR units' ability to influence rural areas within the battle space

makes them the optimal units to mentor and develop security forces outside of key populated centers. This allows the host nation's government to expand its influence.

The LAR unit can provide mentorship and training to the host nation's dismounted infantry and mounted infantry units alike. Fundamentals in mechanized and motorized operations are similar regardless if the host nation has LAV like capability or if its mounted assets consist of Nissan trucks, the basics are the same. LAR units can also develop and enhance infantry and vehicle integration for host nation forces as well. LAR units can provide the GCE a variety options when conducting SSR by virtue of its operational reach and versatility when it comes to training Host Nation security forces in both mounted and dismounted operations.

LAR units have been employed extensively while in support of stability operations. Company C, 3D LAI deployment to Somalia in December of 1992⁴³ and Company D, 2D LAR deployment to Kosovo in 1999 provide examples of how effective LAR units are in this type of environment. LAR units have conducted reconnaissance missions while in support of peace keeping operations in order to develop and shape the operational environment for the GCE commander.⁴⁴ LAR units have also been leveraged to disrupt belligerent activities between two factions through rapid response and engagement. LAR units have prevented belligerent activity by controlling key lines of communications and by providing a persistent presence in troubled areas. LAR units can accomplish other tactical tasks such as conducting random vehicle checkpoints to disrupt belligerent freedom of movement or function as a quick reaction force in support of other units within the GCE.

The utility of LAR in the sphere of IW cannot be understated. Regardless if the LAR unit is conducting COIN, SSR, or stability operations. The GCE can leverage the operational reach of the LAR unit thereby expanding its area of influence. The LAR unit is a combat multiplier to the

GCE by virtue of its versatility and flexibility. Regardless if assigned battle space, functions as an independent maneuver element, or is employed in the capacity as an economy of force, the LAR unit can dominate. The LAR community should utilize the lessons of LAR units' historical operations as a foundation in the development of doctrine that will posture future LAR units in the conduct of IW operations.

The Role of the LAR Scout

Regardless of what type of operation the LAR unit is conducting, the 0311 (Infantry Rifleman) scout is a critical component. The employment of the LAR scout is considerably under developed in current LAR doctrine. The MCWP 3-14 defines the role of the LAR scout as integral part of the LAV 25 system that performs a wide range of tasks.⁴⁵ The scout is what provides the LAR unit the ability to conduct a wide range of operations. The key is that the scout is organic to the LAR unit unlike infantry units that are task organized as mechanized or motorized infantry units.

The LAR T&R manual is deficient in truly defining the role of the scout. Prior to 2009 LAR leaders had to rely both on the LAR T&R manual and Infantry T&R manual to train their units.⁴⁶ In 2009 0311 training tasks were developed to resolve this issue, but there is still significant improvement in defining the way and method in which LAR scouts are to be trained. If there was a linear continuum and the 0321 (Reconnaissance Marine) was on one end of the spectrum and the 0311 was on the other, then the LAR scout would be in the middle. The LAR scout must be well versed in basic infantry tactics, patrolling techniques, reconnaissance and scouting functions, demolition, and controlling of supporting arms. The LAR scout must be proficient in employment of T/O (Table of Organization) weapons, to include the MK153

SMAW (Shoulder-Launched Multipurpose Assault Weapon) and the SASR (Special Application Scoped Rifle).

Training the LAR scout extends beyond the individual Marine but must also focus on team, section, squad, and platoon level tactics, techniques, and procedures. LAR units have been required to “mass scouts” based on the situation and the operational environment. The concept of employing scouts in mass has not been truly developed. LAR units that have been employed within urban areas have effectively influenced the battle space by massing scout supported by LAVs. In this situation the scout element becomes the main effort and the LAV takes on the supporting role.

The LAR community is not consistent when it comes to both training and employing scouts. To compound the problem the 0313 NCO’s and SNCO have become deficient in training and employing the LAR scout. LAR battalions have attempted to address this issue by forming scout platoons within each LAR company or have conducted battalion level “scout packages” normally supervised by the LAR battalion’s 0306 (Infantry Weapons Officer). These methods are effective but can fall short if LAR leadership does not truly foster the proficiency of the scout and fails to define what vehicle and scout integration is.

Formal school training of the LAR scout is deficient. LAR scouts receive the same formal schools training as an 0311 from a regular infantry unit, who attend Infantry Squad Leaders Course or Infantry Unit Leaders Course. There is no formal LAR scout course. This requires LAR units to compete for school seats in specialized schools such as Scout Sniper’s Course, Breacher’s courses, and Sapper courses. In the case of the 0313 SNCOs, their infantry skill are developed when they attend the Infantry Unit Leaders Course.

The LAR community needs to come to consensus on how to properly train the 0311 scout while also continue to develop the 0313 in dismounted infantry skill sets. Only then can the LAR community truly exploit the capability the LAR scout can bring to the battlefield. Scout employment must not be ad hoc or an afterthought but rather it must become a cohesive fighting organization, bottom line the LAR scout is just as critical to the LAR unit as the LAV 25.

LAR Battalion Mission Essential Task List

The hard fought lessons learned from LAR units' past experiences are not sufficiently reflected in the LAR battalion's Mission Essential Task List (METL). The current METL consists of the following: 1. Provide Forces, 2. Conduct amphibious operations, 3. Conduct offensive operations, 4. Conduct defensive operations 5. Conduct Military Operations other than War (MOOTW), 6. Conduct tactical reconnaissance, and 7. Conduct Security Operations in support of maneuver.⁴⁷ In January 2011, the LAR community held a conference where the conference members made recommended revisions to the current METs. The revised METL consists of the following: 1. Provide tasked organized forces, 2. Conduct amphibious operations, 3. Conduct limited offensive operations, 4. Conduct armored security operations in support of maneuver, and 5. Conduct armored reconnaissance.⁴⁸ In addition to revising the METS the LAR conference members made recommended changes to the current LAR Battalion mission statement. The revised mission statement reads as follows: *"The mission of the LAR battalion is to conduct armored reconnaissance, armored security, and limited offensive operations, using economy of force principles."*⁴⁹

Both the current and the proposed METL do not adequately address the mission essential skills that LAR units require to be effective across the range of military operations. The current and proposed METL only postures the LAR battalions to function within the realm of traditional

warfare. The METL does not take into account that the majority of operations that LAR units have conducted for over twenty-seven years have been in the realm of IW. To further compound the issue there is not a mechanism within the LAR community to bridge historical experiences of LAR units with future operating concepts.

It was not until 2010 that the LAR community had a dedicated 0303 (Light Armored Reconnaissance Officer) advocate within Plans, Policies, and Operations (PP&O). Prior to that date, LAR's advocate was an 1802 (Tank Officer) who greatly assisted the LAR community but had to rely heavily on the operational LAR battalions to identify issues or concerns and then articulate those issues to Headquarters Marine Corps. The Light Armored Vehicle Operational Advisory Group (LOAG) which convenes twice a year is the mechanism in which the LAR community addresses concerns, briefs current initiatives, and identifies issues that are then briefed to the Director of Operations for PP&O. Members of the LOAG include; the LAR advocate, the three operational LAR battalion commanders, the reserve LAR battalion Inspector and Instructor, the commanding officer for Light Armored Vehicle Training Company (LAVTC), the 0313 (LAV crewman) occupational field sponsor, and the Program Manager LAV (PMLAV). Due to current operational commitments it is very seldom that all three operational battalion commanders are present at the LOAG and issues concerning the community have become disjointed. This environment has precluded the LAR community from developing a clear vision statement that validates current doctrine or clearly defines the future of the LAR community.

Members of LAVTC, PM LAV, and PP&O provide the only continuity to the LOAG. The drawback is that all of these members are from the supporting establishment. The

turbulence within the LOAG resides from the operational LAR battalion due to a high operational tempo and deployments.

In an era of uncertainty and change the LAR community should address its doctrine with the same tenacity and vigor that it did at its inception. It is as simple as looking at the LAR battalions' history when validating its role within the GCE. LAVTC needs to develop a mechanism that consolidates after actions and serves as the single point of contact for LAR lessons learned. Furthermore, the LAR advocate must solidify the lines of communication between the LAR battalions, and PP&O. This would allow the LAR community to develop doctrine that addresses LAR units' employment across the spectrum of conflict from a holistic approach.

There are commonalities within the spectrum of conflict in terms of tactics, techniques, and procedures between Marine Corps LAR doctrine and U.S. Army cavalry doctrine. The LAR community can merge both in order to produce a single source doctrinal reference for LAR unit leaders. Developing a single source doctrinal reference would also codify the operating concepts of LAR units in the realm of traditional warfare.

The LAR community needs to incorporate into the METL, tasks that require LAR units to train in the conduct of IW operations. Training tasks should focus on COIN and stability operations. Once COIN and stability operations tasks have been integrated into the METL then the LAR community can redefine the LAR battalion's mission statement. A recommended mission statement could read as follows: *The mission of the LAR battalion is to conduct reconnaissance, security operations, and limited offensive operations, across the spectrum of conflict as an independent maneuver element or in support of other tactical units within the GCE.* This mission statement would reinforce the requirement for LAR units to focus on training

tasks across the range of military operations as opposed on being focused exclusively on traditional warfare.

Conclusion

In order to posture future LAR units in confronting the challenges of the future battle field significant improvements must be made. The doctrinal employment of the LAR unit within the realm of traditional warfare needs to be codified and the doctrine within the realm of IW needs to be developed. Merging both the Marine Corps LAR doctrine and comparative U.S. Army Cavalry doctrine would codify LAR doctrine within the traditional warfare context. Utilizing historic and contemporary methods that LAR units have been employed within the realm of IW will assist the LAR community in the development of IW doctrine. Developing a single doctrinal source will enhance LAR unit leaders' ability to train and employ LAR units across the spectrum of conflict.

Regardless of where on the spectrum of conflict a LAR unit is operating, the potential that the unit will be employed in an urban environment is extremely high. Enhancing LAR unit operating concepts in MOUT and also enhancing the capability of the LAR scout will increase the LAR units' effectiveness in the urban arena.

In an era of uncertainty and change, the LAR community must embrace the idea that the likelihood of future LAR units conducting IW operations is greater than that of traditional operations. The LAR community needs to refine the LAR battalions' METL to encompass IW. Preparing for IW does not come at the expense of preparing for traditional warfare.

LAR units are extremely versatile, flexible, and fluid when properly prepared and trained. The future of LAR units is in the hands of the LAR community. It is the mindset and training of the LAR Marines that make an effective LAR unit and not just the system.

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